Subject: Acknowledge, repair, heal.
From: Mitch O'Farrell <councilmember.ofarrell@lacity.org>
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Mitch O'Farrell, Councilmember, 13th District

Friend --

The Los Angeles City Council paid tribute to the past, the present, and the future of Native American Angelenos during our annual Heritage Month event at City Hall. The City Council shined the spotlight on the following honorees: the 40th Anniversary of the Los Angeles City-County Native American Indian Commission; the University of California, Los Angeles American Indian Resource Center; actor Martin Sensmeier; and the American Indian Community Council. The City Council and the Department of Cultural Affairs also unveiled the cultural guide and calendar, designed by artist Ray Rivera.

During the meeting, dozens of people provided testimony in support of replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples Day. The City Council has the opportunity to follow cities and states across the country in declaring the second Monday in October as Indigenous People's Day in the City of Los Angeles. Christopher Columbus' legacy of extreme violence, enslavement, and brutality is not in dispute. Nor is the suffering, destruction of cultures, and subjugation of Los Angeles' original indigenous people, who were here thousands of years before anyone else.

I authored a motion last year to establish Indigenous Peoples Day in the City of Los Angeles, home to the largest population of indigenous people of any city in the United States. After extensive research, multiple interviews, and community forums over the course of several months, the City's Human Relations Commission, in collaboration with the University of California, Los Angeles and in conjunction with the Los Angeles City and County Native American Commission, recently presented a report to the Arts Parks, and Los Angeles River Committee on the historical importance and cultural impact of recognizing this day as an official City holiday in Los Angeles.

Recognizing the contributions, history, and sacrifices made by the original inhabitants of the Los Angeles area is long overdue. Celebrating Columbus Day is becoming ever more dubious as there is a greater awareness of the well documented history of the misery he set in motion across the Americas from the time he set foot on the shores of what is historically referred to as Hispaniola in 1492. We need to remember that he conquered the native population, and returned to the "New World" three additional times, setting in motion a genocide that would last centuries.

A few hundred years later, the Spanish missionaries came to California, decimating native Tribes to the point of extinction in some cases. It is time to reflect on the legacy of these actions and create a permanent tribute to the people who made it possible for the rest of us to make a life for ourselves on the lands that the original inhabitants were so mercilessly removed from.

The public testimony of dozens of Angelenos today sent a strong message to our Native communities, and to the nation, that we are not ignorant of history, nor afraid to confront its brutal past and embrace a future free from the stain of a psychologically harmful false mythology. I hope to have your support in declaring Indigenous People's Day, as the second Monday in October.

Warm regards,

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